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AUTHOR Murphy, Jerome T.
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ABSTRACT

This paper, prepared for a National Institute of Education conference on state governance issues in education, reviews the most important recent research on the role of the executive branch in state education policy-making and implementation. The literature review is divided into five categories: (1) input/output studies; (2) policy-making studies; (3) policy implementation studies; (4) studies of the cumulative impact of state policy; and (5) an analysis of methodological issues. The paper recommends additional research on a broader spectrum of the states, on executive agencies other than state education agencies (SEAs) and on the inner workings and lower levels of SEAs. It also emphasizes a focus on specific policies, people, and process to learn more about the dynamics of policy-making. As a higher priority, the paper suggests research on the implementation of specific policies, focusing on how and why they work in practice, on local capacity, and on strategies used by SEAs to influence local activities. As the highest priority, the paper suggests a focus on the cumulative impact of state policies on the schools, looking for both direct and indirect effects, and for models of state-local relations. (Author)

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THE STATE ROLE IN EDUCATION
PAST RESEARCH AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Jerome T. Murphy*

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*The author is Co-director of the Institute for Educational Policy Studies at Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON
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Abstract

This paper, prepared for an NIE conference on state governance issues in education, reviews the most important recent research on the role of the executive branch in state education policymaking and implementation. The literature review is divided into five categories: 1) input/output studies; 2) policymaking studies; 3) policy implementation studies; 4) studies of the cumulative impact of state policy; and 5) an analysis of methodological issues.

The paper recommends additional research on a broader spectrum of the states, on executive agencies other than SEAs and on the inner workings and lower levels of SEAs. It also emphasizes a focus on specific policies, people and process to learn more about the dynamics of policymaking. As a higher priority, the paper suggests research on the implementation of specific policies, focusing on how and why they work in practice, on local capacity, and on strategies used by SEAs to influence local activities. As the highest priority, the paper suggests a focus on the cumulative impact of state policies on the schools, looking for both direct and indirect effects, and for models of state-local relations.

I. INTRODUCTION[1]

The states have seemingly come of age in the governance of education. Since the mid-sixties, state governments have grappled with controversial problems of desegregation, student rights and unrest, school finance reform, aid to minority groups, fiscal crises and tax caps, declining enrollment and confidence, collective bargaining, accountability and competency testing. During this time, powerful coalitions of education interest groups have fallen apart, active new groups have joined the competition for limited resources, the courts have entered the fray and governors and legislators have increased their participation--building professional staffs, overseeing budgets, taking stands on educational issues.[2]

Meanwhile, state education agencies (SEAs), once mostly innocuous and invisible, have grown dramatically in size, and have assumed major responsibility in administering complex new programs. Much of this growth has come from federal categorical programs and substantial federal aid, including support for some 40 percent of the cost of running SEAs.[3] Moreover, the states have developed their own programs. For example, 20 states administer bilingual programs, 16 administer state compensatory programs, at least 34 oversee competency testing programs, and the states spend six times as much as the federal government on education for the handicapped.[4]

The level of activity, of course, varies significantly from state to state. But with it has come a growing recognition of the importance of the states, a growing attention to the appropriate state role in education and, in some quarters, a mounting concern that decision-making has become too centralized. At the same time, it is recognized that our research

knowledge of what the states do, with what effects, has not kept pace with all these changes. Also, some would argue that the little we know from research is based on faulty methodology.

Presumably for these kinds of reasons and others, NIE has commissioned four working papers to examine the research on the state role in making and implementing educational policy. This paper focuses on state executive agencies, particularly SEAs. The other three papers focus on higher education, on the role of state legislatures, and on the role of state courts. Taken together, these four papers should provide a review and assessment of the most important past research, identify gaps in the research and current issues, and offer some suggestions for next steps. These papers will be the targets at an NIE-sponsored skeet-shoot on January 31 and February 1, 1980.

Before turning to a discussion of the research, however, I'd like to flag several factors that influenced my thinking. First, I assumed that NIE was principally interested in a discussion of the substantive research on the state role in education, so I discuss important methodological issues only in passing. Second, I assumed that the chief audience for the proposed research is meant to be policymakers, government officials and analysts with an interest in research that might be useful in informing policy, in changing patterns of governance, and in improving the state role in education. Consequently, the suggestions for next steps emphasize "applied" research. Third, there are several issues (e.g., competency testing, school finance reforms) that have important implications for SEAs but are only mentioned in passing because other units of the federal government are addressing them.

Finally, my suggested research agenda, of course, reflects the character of research in the field. Wirt calls it a free-market system for choosing research topics, caused by the absence of particular theories, scholars, or sets of concepts that could lead to agreed-upon next research steps.[5] Consequently, my suggested next steps reflect my experiences and biases, and hunches about important questions--all of which can differ from the views of others.

II. THE RESEARCH: A REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A variety of schemes could be used to categorize the most important recent research on the role of the executive branch in state education policymaking and implementation. For the following discussion, I have divided the research into four somewhat artificial categories: (1) input/output studies; (2) policymaking studies; (3) policy implementation studies; and (4) studies of the cumulative impact of state policy. These categories are considered below in what I believe to be their ascending order of importance for additional research support. After that, I consider briefly some methodological questions encountered in doing research on the states.

1. Input/Output Studies

One popular approach to studying the states is to focus on state-level policy outcomes and try to link them statistically with various inputs. For example, what is the relationship between economic indicators of wealth, or measures of political party dominance, and state expendi-

tures on the schools? There is a long tradition of state-level research in this area, most of which doesn't deal exclusively with educational issues. It includes the work of such scholars as Sharkansky, Dye, and Ziegler and Johnson.[6] These studies normally find low correlations, or not-very-surprising findings such as educational expenditures correlate with wealth.

Following somewhat along the same lines, Campbell and Mazzoni tried to correlate variations in state governance structure (e.g., method of selecting the state board of education or the chief state school officer) with various outcomes (e.g., state school expenditures, level of perceived influence.)[7] The authors seemed to assume that formal structure is a major determinant of policy processes and outcomes. They found, however, that "change in structural arrangements alone may not appreciably alter the process of policy making within a state."[8] While this finding provides government reorganizers with less help than hoped for, it might encourage researchers to look beyond formal structure for an understanding of the policymaking process. To be sure, I don't think this line of research offers as much potential as others, particularly in terms of understanding the role of state executive agencies in making and implementing education policy.

2. Policymaking Studies

The bulk of the research on the state role in education falls into this category. It focuses on the political actors and institutions within the states and the role they play in education policymaking. The research discusses personal characteristics, institutional properties, formal

structure and, to a limited degree, the dynamics of the policymaking process. To the extent that a dependent variable is examined, it usually is an actor's perceived influence in policy circles, as opposed to actual influence on a particular policy or the policy's effects on schools. This type of research seems to be the principal state-related focus of NIE's Law and Government in Education program.[9] ~~It also is a genre of~~ research traditionally conducted by political scientists. In my view, further research along some of these lines is important, but I suspect there may be better ways, as I will indicate in the following two sections, to research and improve the state role in education.

The pioneering research in this area was the 1962 work of Bailey et al. on seven New England states and New York, and the 1966 research of Masters et al. on three midwestern states.[10] These exploratory case studies mapped the state governance scene by describing the role of various actors, the constraints under which they operated, and how schoolmen achieved their political goals. The research revealed the importance of coalition politics, the heavy influence of professional educators and their friends, and the closed nature of decision-making, as well as how policymaking varied substantially across the states. Iannaccone, synthesizing the data from these 11 case studies in 1967, developed a four-part typology of how state education interest groups influenced the legislatures in the different states, viewing this as the most important link in the state education policymaking system.[11]

More recently, Campbell and Mazzoni have brought much of our descriptive knowledge relatively up-to-date with the most comprehensive study of state policymaking ever undertaken.[12] We're presented with a "snapshot,"

dated late 1972 to early 1973, of some interesting facts about their 12-state sample: state board members were predominately white, male and well-to-do; chief state school officers came mainly from rural backgrounds and were normally recruited from school superintendencies or state departments of education; governors have hired education aides, but they lacked prior public school experience; state teachers associations controlled impressive financial resources. (In California, for example, the association collected some $11 million in annual dues and had a $600,000 "political war chest").

Campbell and Mazzoni also present a variety of information about the policy-making influence (as distinct from influence during implementation) of various actors: state board members are minor participants, legitimating the policies of the chief; chiefs are more influential with their agencies than with their legislatures; governors are particularly strong on policies of school finance reform and taxation; state teacher associations are viewed by legislators as among the most powerful lobbyists.

Finally, this massive piece of research provides some useful information on important changes and trends in the states: the staffs of state departments of education have doubled and tripled during the last decade or so; many governors have become a lot more active in education; once monolithic and powerful coalitions of schoolmen have broken up, mainly over labor-management disputes; decision-making has become more open, pluralistic, and politicized; and teacher groups are increasingly willing to use direct political pressure.

Three other studies of the state role in policymaking deserve brief attention. Milstein, analyzing data from visits to California and New

York (and some survey date), in 1976 gauged the impact of federal aid--mainly ESEA and NDEA--on SEAs and evaluated their response to their new-found resources and visibility.[13] He concluded that federal aid has had a significant impact, but SEAs have failed to grasp the initiative.

In 1978, Katz provided a useful, if superficial, snapshot of state educational policymaking, based on questionnaire data from 22 states.[14] The picture painted is not much different from Campbell and Mazzoni's, but his report does provide some interesting discussion of a variety of issues facing the states--finance reforms, competency testing, collective bargaining, education of the handicapped, higher education accountability, and declining enrollments.

Finally, Murphy has edited a forthcoming book of conversations with four former chief state school officers (Nyquist of New York, Nix of Georgia, Colburg of Montana, Pittenger of Pennsylvania).[15] This volume describes what it is like to be a chief, how they perceive their roles, and how the job is changing. It delineates how chiefs work with others in the policy process--state boards of education, governors, legislators, education interest groups, school administrators, federal officials, national organizations. It provides insights into the dynamics of state policymaking, and highlights the important role played by personality, accident, timing, and personal background.

Taken together, this research provides an assortment of data, varying in richness and depth, on people, structure, institutions, and process. We know a fair amount about the personal characteristics of state board members, chief state school officers, top SEA staff, and about various patterns of election, appointment, and formal organization. In my view,

further research of this kind, at least the way it's been done in the past, is not high priority, particularly since these personal and structural characteristics, by themselves, don't seem to be systematically related to anything important. However, NIE might focus some attention on people and structure at the middle-management level and below. Since these officials are the major contacts with the schools, and since little is known about them, it might pay to learn more about who they are, how their ranks have changed, and how they operate. It might also be useful to learn more about what appears to be a trend, at least in some states, toward greater reliance on intermediate units, either SEA regional offices or more independent agencies such as the BOCES in New York.

We have also collected a fair amount of descriptive information about the institutional actors at the state level and how they generally relate to one another. The gaps in this research are two. First, executive agencies that play an important role in educational policymaking, other than SEAs, have not been adequately studied. For example, the conventional view is that state planning offices post-audit committees, accounting agencies, and executive budget offices are becoming bigger, more professional, and more important, but these impressions need systematic study.[16] Furthermore, it seems that other "outsiders" in the executive branch are becoming more involved with SEAs--attorneys general, equal opportunities offices, mental-health agencies, prisons, offices for children. We know virtually nothing about these apparently expanding interconnections.

Second, our knowledge of SEAs reflects research on only a handful of

states.[17] In fact, there seems to be a tendency to equate events in New York and California with what's happening or will happen in other states--a generalization which I suspect is often mistaken. If NIE is concerned about the significant diversity across the states--an important issue in federal-state relations--then the Institute might well focus on gathering additional data on the many states hardly ever studied, including those often cited as the "worst cases."

In addition, our understanding of state policymaking would profit by focusing on specific policies, the process of policy development, and the importance of the personal dimensions to politics. At present, there is relatively little information about how different players at the state level arrive at decisions under what circumstances and why.[18] This is required to understand the interplay of people, context, structure, climate, events and issues, and to grasp the stuff of politics in the policymaking process. What's more, as the research has become more comprehensive and methodologically sophisticated, it has also become more vampire-like in quality--the blood has been carefully removed from the subject. For example, one is more likely to be presented with a table ranking the influence of the Georgia governor and the Georgia chief state school officer than with a telling account of the pitched battles between Jimmy Carter and Jack Nix. Further, we even lack systematic data on the status of important policies across the states.

For the most part, the research I'm suggesting here, as elsewhere in this paper, would require in-depth analyses that would take a while to complete. But there are also possibilities in this area for quick studies involving compilations and syntheses of already existing data. For

example, NIE's publication, School Finance Reforms in The States 1976-1977, which provides basic comparative information on an important policy issue, could be used as a model for similar reports on other state issues such as competency testing, bilingual education, collective bargaining, teacher certification, and so forth. In any case, this focus on process, people, and specific policies strikes me as a high priority in this area of research.

Finally, it might make sense to fill one other gap. We need to know more about the internal workings of SEAs and the determinants of institutional capacity. What I have in mind here is somewhat similar to the kinds of basic organizational research first sponsored by NIE's School Capacity for Problem Solving group. Many of the questions raised about the schools might also be raised about SEAs. For example, how do SEAs allocate resources, recruit staff, or negotiate with unions? Under what conditions have SEAs changed their pattern of behavior, including their ways of dealing with school districts? How and when are innovative ideas adopted? How do SEAs process information, make use of evaluation reports? How do people form opinions about SEA effectiveness? What do we mean by institutional capacity and how might it be improved? How would you know an effective SEA if you saw it? These kinds of questions lead to more basic research than applied, but such research might make sense in trying to understand the most-written-about executive education agencies at the state level.

3. Policy Implementation Studies

Unlike the research discussed above, which mainly concerns a better understanding of state policymaking, the research discussed here would focus on what happens after a policy is established. The unit of analysis would be a specific state policy, with a concern for what it looks like in practice, what explains that, and what this says about the appropriate state role, at least in a particular policy area. This discussion assumes that the state role in education is important--to the extent that it affects what happens locally. This discussion thus also assumes that the most important place to collect data on the state role is not the state capital, but the schools. In my view, this orientation has greater potential for improving the states' contribution to the schools than the research discussed in the last two sections and, for that reason, it strikes me as a higher priority.

The study of policy implementation, at least using that label, is less than a decade old. During that time, a number of provocative studies have been produced that thoughtfully discuss what happens at one level of government after a policy is established at another.[19] During that time, moreover, the focus of the research seems to have changed. Indeed, reading the early research was a little like reading the autopsy reports in The County Medical Examiners Annual Review--the studies focused on why the policy patient's health had failed. More recently, though, the research seems less concerned with just analyzing "the disease" and more concerned with preventive medicine (by building implementation analysis into policy analysis),[20] with examining the vital signs of a healthy

policy patient (by studying the determinants of successful implementation),[21] and with generating more effective prescriptions. While the implementation literature, not surprisingly, is still short on theory, advice, and breadth of coverage, the research in a short time has generated some quite useful insights into the character of intergovernmental relations, into how organizations respond to external interventions, and into the nature of the implementation process.

Unfortunately, for the purposes of this paper, very little of the implementation research has focused attention on the state role in education, and the work that has been done is principally focused on the implementation of federal programs. The only relevant, recent studies on state-related issues deserve brief mention before turning to next steps.

Berke and Kirst, in 1972, studied the equalizing effects of federal aid, particularly ESEA Title I, on education.[22] As part of the study, they examined the impact of federal programs on six education agencies, finding variation among the SEAs and, among other things, an inclination on their part to interpret federal guidelines in a manner consistent with state purposes.

In another study of federal aid, Murphy, in 1974, examined the implementation of ESEA Title V in nine SEAs, arguing that the money was not primarily used as the reformers had hoped, largely because of endemic characteristics of organizations that impede rapid change and that can quickly restrict the use of unrestricted funds.[23] The research also examined a series of federal alternatives for further strengthening SEAs.

In one of the few implementation studies of a state program,

Weatherly and Lipsky, in 1977, examined the early implementation of Massachusetts' Chapter 766--education aid to the handicapped--and documented the role of teachers ("street-level bureaucrats") in responding to state initiatives.[24] The authors found a fair amount of discretion at the school level, allowing teachers, coping with the law, to implement practices inconsistent with legislative intent.

In another major study of a federal program, the Syracuse Research Corporation, in 1977, examined the administration and implementation of ESEA Title I in eight states.[25] This NIE-funded study found that "considerable improvement in the administrative performance of SEAs and LEAs has occurred in the last five to seven years."[26] Basically, the study gave the Title I program and its regulatory approach high marks, although the researchers did point to some remaining compliance problems and to areas still requiring improvement.

Finally, the Rand Corporation has just completed a study of the congressional consolidation of federal programs under ESEA Title IV.[27] The researchers found that the states vary significantly in their responses to this federal initiative, but that there is little evidence of genuine program consolidation.

On the whole, these implementation studies have added to our understanding of SEA responses to different types of federal initiatives, they have sharpened our understanding of SEA administrative procedures and their variation across the states, and they have provided a "bottom-up" view of federal and state policy. Like implementation studies in general, these state-related studies tend to undermine faith in the power of one level of government to directly control behavior in another, thus raising

questions about the exercise of the state role in education. In fact, the studies suggest that the language we use to discuss "policymaking and implementation" has been far outstripped by our growing understanding of these processes.

Take the term "policymaker" for example. In some cases, so-called policymakers actually make policy; Mr. Volker at the Federal Reserve is an example. But in most cases, all that policymakers do is help build, mold, enact, declare, or shape policy. "Policy-shapers" is a more accurate term than "policymakers," and even that term is probably an exaggeration in some policy areas.

Another example is "implementation," a term that implies that a policy is a "blueprint" that ought to be executed. In some cases, this notion makes sense. But in others, a policy is less a "blueprint" than a set of vague hopes or despositions, a statement of ideology, or really a license to explore solutions within certain bounds. Rather than the "implementation" process, it makes more sense to talk about the "evolution," "improvisation" or "maturation" process, all of which capture the notion of a "policy" developing over time and subject to a wide variety of forces.[28]

I am not wed to any of these words, but I do believe that our thinking would be clearer and our advice to government officials would be better if our language and imagery were more accurate. This could all be helped by thoughtful research, including work on state policies, that sought better metaphors to describe the so-called implementation process.

Moreover, a look at the studies of state policy implementation, reviewed above, leads to the conclusion that they hardly scratch the

surface. Despite the flood of state-level social legislation passed during the last decade, we know little about how it works in practice. And we don't know much about how state and local governments influence one another under different sets of circumstances. These issues are particularly amenable to interesting research because of the natural variation in policies and practices across the states.

For these reasons, NIE might well fund research on the implementation and impact of a variety of state policies. Because it is impossible to cover everything, NIE could focus its attention on a limited number of policies that have salience in several states, that might seem ripe for revision, and that have the potential for illuminating and improving the state role in education.

The research could focus on three related types of questions. First, it could describe what's happening at the local level. What does the policy look like in practice? What are the variations across sites? How different groups and individuals perceive the policy? Second, the research could try to understand the reasons for variation and the determinants of "successful" implementation. What accounts for the differences? What do we mean by "success" and what explains it? Finally, in this context, the research could examine various management strategies used by the states to promote its policies and the capacity of the states to effectively influence local implementation. This could increase our primitive knowledge of the various approaches used by the states to exercise influence in inter-governmental relations--rules and regulations, money, information, technical assistance, training, delegation of authority. What do these strategies look like in practice? Which of them, under what set of

circumstances, with what kinds of policies, seem to have what effects at the delivery level?

Collecting these kinds of data can be time-consuming, expensive work. It would mostly require comparative case studies of particular policies, relying heavily on longitudinal, qualitative data and focusing primarily on data collected at the local level. Despite the costs associated with collecting these kinds of data, my hunch is that a locally-based policy implementation focus that looks vertically through the system at a particular policy initiative, rather than examining state-level horizontal relationships in the making of policy, offers a better hope of illuminating the impact of the state role in education, of improving our words for describing how the policy "system" works, and perhaps of ever helping public officials deal with specific policy issues facing them.

4. Studies of the Cumulative Impact of State Policy

There is a growing body of research and commentary that is raising questions about the cumulative impact of central government policy on the local delivery of services. The writing is becoming more strident, marked by statements of concern about the increasing activity and influence of central actors--the states, but also the federal government and the courts. Kirst, for example, argues that "during the last two decades... policy-setting power in American public education has become increasingly centralized, and this shift of authority over academic policy is cause for alarm."[29] He believes that the "discretion of local officials in school policymaking shrinks as state education codes and regulations grow",[30] and recommends less centralized control and more attention to the school site.

Such commentary raises directly the question of the appropriate state role in the governance of education and it suggests an important research agenda that might help illuminate the answer. In my view, herein lies some of the most important work that NIE could fund to learn more about the states.

The most comprehensive statement of the perceived problems of increasing government intervention comes from Arthur Wise in a recent book, Legislated Learning: The Bureaucratization of the American Classroom.[31] Wise argues that federal and state governments are now heavily involved in areas formally reserved to local government and consequently, "schools are becoming more bureaucratic."[32] He sees this central involvement as apparently "destined to continue unabated" with, among other things, central agencies like SEAs growing in size and influence.[33] He believes that "the cumulative impact of these educational policies may either be a national system of education or fifty state systems of education which are all but undistinguishable."[34] He warns that "nothing less is at stake in this struggle for power than individual freedom in a democratic society."[35]

As clarion calls to reformers, these assessments are useful. But as reflections of reality and predictions of the future, they may be a bit exaggerated. In my view, Wise has overstated the problem, partly misdiagnosed it, and is probably mistaken in his prognosis. While this is not the place to review Wise's book, several points deserve mention because the book embodies important, provocative ideas that seem to have wide currency.

As to his prognosis, during this century there has been a world-wide

trend toward greater centralization of government power, but it may be reversing. This seems to be the case in the educational systems of Western Europe and Australia, and more generally in federal systems around the world.[36] I suspect that the forces at work in other countries to decentralize may well come into stronger play here during the next decade or so. Wise's book itself is part of the counterpressure.

Second, while Wise seems to be correct in identifying a school "problem" caused in part by the growth in policy, I suspect the policy-related problem may have less to do with the actual bureaucratization of the classroom and more to do with other things: a litigious climate has developed; teachers feel like functionaries; competing power centers have grown in schools making coordinated action difficult.[37] The problem is that neither these hypotheses, nor Wise's, have been adequately tested with empirical data.

Finally, there's an impressive array of organizational and implementation research, briefly mentioned earlier, that highlights the inability of central actors to control the behavior at the periphery and thus seems to contradict Wise's arguments about the local impact of central policy directives. The Rand "change agent" study, for example, found that federal strategies and procedures were not important determinants of successful project implementation.[38] In 1977, Tucker argued that the "mounting research evidence [shows] that the key determinants of educational quality are essentially local in character and by their nature are simply not subject to control of people at the federal level of government."[39] In 1979, Farrar et al. found federal initiatives overwhelmed by local influences.[40] And Elmore, in 1979, argued:

> The notion that [central] policymakers exercise--or ought to exercise--some kind of direct and determinant control over policy implementation might be called the "noble lie" of conventional public administration... most of what happens in the implementation process cannot be explained by the intentions and directions of policymakers. (Emphasis in original.)[41]

Such findings have lead to disillusionment in some quarters about central government intervention.

If Wise overstates the local impact of central policy, I suspect that the organizational researchers' work has led to a view that understates the impact of central actors--by looking for results too soon after a program is initiated and by not looking in all the right places. Take ESEA Title I as an example. In its early days it was cited as a classic example of limited federal influence at the local level, only later, after 10 years or so in practice, to be cited as a program finally reaching its target population.[42] The impact of central intervention, like the impact of Chinese Water Torture, is poorly gauged by premature evaluation.

Moreover, the research has tended to look for direct effects of central intervention, and not finding much has concluded that central forces are not very consequential. My guess is that we could do a better job of identifying important indirect effects--the impact of central programs on local agendas of action, on conversations about particular problems, on the climate of organizations, and on other opportunities made possible through the provision of central resources. A possible model for this type of approach can be found in the recent research on evaluation utilization. Scholars no longer evaluate the impact of evaluations just in terms of their direct effects.[43]

Even if the researchers appear to disagree about the effects of central activity and its future, there does seem to be a growing consensus among them that the pendulum has swung too far toward detailed, central rules and regulations--at least on issues of school quality, if not in promoting equality. The rules may not be bureaucratizing the classroom, but they often are ineffective and inappropriate, and dodging them saps energy that could be better spent solving administrative problems, teaching, and responding to state-developed incentives. The same basic point was made 2500 years ago by a Chinese philosopher. To paraphrase Lao Tse, "Implementing a big program is like cooking a small fish--too much handling will spoil it."

This negative attitude toward central rules may be increasingly common among researchers, but it is not shared by many school reformers who still believe in central action to improve the schools. They remind us that today's "solution" (more local discretion) used to be thought of as the "problem"--after all, the reason why central reformers got involved in education was because of the perceived abuse of local discretion.

Herein lies the rub, and it takes the discussion back to research on the state role in education. <u>This is a period of debate about the appropriate state role in education, a period of conflict over directions for reform, a period of great uncertainty about the nature of state governance in the 80's</u>. All of this is exacerbated by what appears to be a shift taking place in society's thinking about the purposes of schooling. Increasingly, schools seem to be viewed less as vehicles for social reform for <u>groups</u> and more as places to provide a good and fair education

for individuals--thus helping to explain the new day in the sun for school-sites and raising further questions about the appropriate state role. Given this picture, it is not surprising that Wirt has concluded that "American public schools and their decision-making arrangements are in a transition unknown since the reform effort late in the 19th century to bring schools out from under party control."[44]

In this context, it might help to know a lot more about where we are, before trying to identify appropriate changes in state-local relations. It might help to know more about the effects of various state policies and their cumulative impact on school systems and on intergovernmental relations.[45]

My suggestions for research, then, are twofold and they propose a unit of analysis that differs from those discussed earlier. Rather than focusing on state institution's individual characteristics, or policy, the basic unit of analysis would be the school system, the school site, or particular roles within the educational delivery system--school superintendent, principal, teacher. The research, first, could examine the cumulative impact of state policy on some or all of these units, and explore such things as:

--the ways in which different rules impinge on different parts of the so-called system. If this were done, the notion of "cumulative" impact might have a more refined and perhaps quite different meaning.

--the ways in which different rules have quite different effects on the same part of the system. For example, teachers likely respond quite differently to rules requiring the display of outcome data on their work with children, versus loosely-monitored rules governing who

should receive special classroom attention.

--the various effects of different rules--direct, indirect, secondary and tertiary. Also, the research could distinguish between "real" effects on programs and symbolic effects designed to fend off outside influences.

--the various ways that the state exercises local influence other than through rules--for example, money, technical assistance and training, incentives, and so forth.

Such research presumably could help us talk more systematically about different kinds of state influence, including the differential effect of different kinds of rules on different parts of the system under different sets of circumstances. Such refinement and specificity could sharpen the debate about the abstraction -- "the appropriate state role".[46]

My second suggestion for research in this category goes to the question of what might be a "better" set of arrangements between state and local governments than what currently exists (at least in some states). NIE might postulate an ideal set of state-local relationships, set out to identify some models both in the American states and abroad, collect data that examines the costs and benefits of these model arrangements, and explore the conditions that make these patterns possible. For example, to the extent that less state-level control and more school-level autonomy seem appealing (or appear to be a trend), NIE could fund research into the conditions and consequences of such arrangements where they already exist.

The findings of such research, of course, could not be transferred

directly to other settings. But such research might help shorten the historic pendulum swings between centralization and decentralization, through better information about the unforeseen problems as well as the potential benefits of alternative patterns of governance.

5. A Note on Methodology

The case-study research on the states had recently encountered serious criticism of its methodology. Burlingame and Geske, after reviewing a series of comparative case studies of state politics (most of which were discussed earlier in this paper), concluded that "the studies have often been flawed scientifically; the materials collected are now lost to other researchers and, funding sources have had strong impacts on the shape of and outcome of the studies."[47] They based their conclusions on an examination of sample size and representativeness, documentation, collection procedures, theoretical development and pre-conceived purpose. Similarly Wiles argues that "our existing methodology is a hodgepodge of conflicting assumptions about collection, analysis and interpretation"[48] and he wonders out loud whether our systematic inquiry offers anything more than the popular "subjective" literature on state politics in education.[49]

What's important about these two useful papers is less their specific criticisms, which in many cases can be rebutted, but what they reflect--a recognition of the growing reliance on case studies and a sense that the methodology is far from codified, not well understood, and viewed as "unscientific." This problem of case-study methodology is not unique to research of the states, and thus full consideration of the matter is

beyond the scope of this paper. But the concerns that have been raised suggest that NIE, through some program somewhere, should support work on the further development and codification of case-study methodology.[50]

Moreover, NIE might want to explore alternative methodologies for studying the states, particularly if the agency pursues research on the impact of particular policies, as suggested in section 3 above. A promising model is one recently developed and tested by the Brookings Institution in its examination of the impact of three large federal programs, including revenue sharing.[51] The field data were collected in 50 to 60 jurisdictions by a network of social science researchers across the states who used a uniform analytic framework to study the local and state impact of these three programs. Although this approach is not without its problems, it does strike an interesting middle-ground between the breadth of survey research and the depth of case-study analysis. It also offers the interesting possibility of linking together the often-isolated researchers who have a common interest in state-level education policy.

III. A CONCLUDING COMMENT

The research agenda outlined above is long and diverse, and emphasizes long-term studies. It represents one possible slant on a limited part of the research terrain--the executive branch. I've suggested additional research on a broader spectrum of the states, on executive agencies other than SEAs, and on the inner workings and lower levels of SEAs. I've also emphasized a focus on specific policies, people and process to learn more about the dynamics of policymaking. As a higher

priority. I've suggested research on the implementation of specific policies, focusing on how and why they work in practice on local capacity, and on the strategies used by SEAs to influence local activities. As my highest priority, I've suggested a focus on the cumulative impact of state policies on the schools, looking for both direct and indirect effects, and for models of state-local relations. My research agenda emphasizes the importance of the local perspective in understanding the state role.

There's some irony in the fact that a paper meant to suggest research on how to study the state role in education ends up arguing that researchers should not spend most of their time hobnobbing with state officials. It reflects my conviction that the significance of the state role and state policy is directly proportional to the differences that these things make locally--and that ought to be explored. I've also emphasized this local-orientation because that's not the way research on the state role has generally been conceived by political scientists.[52]

This somewhat unconventional orientation further exacerbates a problem I'd like to highlight in conclusion--finding the high-quality personpower willing and able to do the proposed research. So far, education research on the states has not attracted an oversupply of those proverbial "first-rate minds." One reason is that until relatively recently it has been hard to attract social scientists to any aspects of educational policymaking, much less to the states which have not exactly been viewed--wrongly, I think--as hotbeds of fascinating research puzzles. Another reason is that scholars are motivated in part by the possibilities of support, prestige and career advancement. In the past, funding agencies,

political science departments and leading schools of public policy have ignored the states, expressing more interest in macro-issues at the federal level and local urban issues.[53]

Whatever the reasons, all of this has important implication for NIE as it considers focusing research attention on the state role in education. It suggests that if NIE wants to promote first-rate research, particularly studies outside mainstream political science, it will need not only to fund the research, but to develop incentives to attract, hold, reward and perhaps even train young scholars with an interest in state-related issues. All of this will take time and resources, with little chance of success if this possible new initiative of NIE is viewed as only a two or three year commitment.[54]

FOOTNOTES

[1]I'd like to thank Alfred Light, Susan Johnson and Brenda Turnbull for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. The paper also bears the mark of ongoing conversations with David Cohen, Patricia Graham, Carol Weiss and other researchers at the Institute for Educational Policy Studies.

[2]In writing this paper, I have drawn freely, where appropriate, on three other pieces of my writing: (1) A memo to Jim Kelly, NIE Task Force on School Finance and Governance, August 19, 1977; (2) A Review of State Policy Making for the Public Schools, by Roald F. Campbell and Tim L. Mazzoni, Jr.; and (3) an edited forthcoming book, State Leadership in Education: On Being a Chief State School Officer.

[3]J. T. Murphy, State Education Agencies and Discretionary Funds, Lexington, Ma.: D.C. Heath, 1974, p. 246. This figure is out-of-date, but, to my knowledge, it has not been updated.

[4]The data on programs for the bilingual, handicapped and disadvantaged comes from J. C. Baratz, et al., "Changing The Federal-State Partnership: The Effects of Consolidation", in Grants Consolidation: A New Balance in Federal Aid to Schools? edited by C. P. Kearney and E. A. Vanderputten, Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1979, p. 18.

[5]F. M. Wirt, "The Use of Political Science in the Study of Educational Administration", in Problem-Finding in Educational Administration: Trends in Research and Theory, edited by G. L. Immegart and W. L. Boyd, Lexington, Ma.: D. C. Heath, 1979.

[6]I. Sharkansky, Spending in the American States, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968; T. R. Dye, Politics, Economics and the Public: Policy Outcomes in the American States, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966; and H. Ziegler and K. F. Johnson, The Politics of Education in the States, N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972.

[7]R. F. Campbell and T. L. Mazzoni, Jr. State Policy Making for the Public Schools, Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan, 1976.

[8]Ibid., p. 432.

[9]National Institute of Education, Grants for Research on Law and Government in Education, Washington, D.C.: NIE, 1979, p. 17.

[10]S. K. Bailey, et al., Schoolmen and Politics: A Study of State Aid to Education in the Northeast, Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1962; and N. A. Masters, et al., State Politics and the Public Schools: an Exploratory Analysis, N.Y.: Knopf, 1964.

[11]L. Iannaccone, Politics in Education, N.Y.: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1967. His four structural types are termed locally-based disparate, state-wide monolithic, state-wide fragmented and state-wide syndical.

[12]Campbell and Mazzoni, op.cit.

[13]M. M. Milstein, Impact and Response: Federal Aid and State Education Agencies, N.Y.: Teachers College Press, 1976.

[14]E. Katz, Educational Policymaking 1977-78: A Snapshot from the States, Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, November 1978.

[15]Murphy, ed., State Leadership..., op. cit. In addition to the studies cited in the text, the reader's attention is called to three others. E. Fuller and J. Pearson, eds., Education in the States, 2 vols., Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1969; F. M. Wirt, "School Policy Culture and State Decentralization" in Yearbook on the Politics of Education, edited by J. Scribner, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977; and F. M. Wirt, "Education Politics and Policies" in Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis, edited by H. Jacobs and K. N. Vines, Boston: Little, Brown, 1976.

[16]For a summary of the research on the role of the governor in education, see Chapter IV in Campbell and Mazzoni, op. cit. For an examination of state planning offices, see T. L. Boyle and D. S. Wright, "The Governor, Planning, and Governmental Activity", in The American Governor in Behavioral Perspective, edited by T. L. Boyle and J. O. Williams, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1972.

[17]M. Burlingame and T. G. Geske, "State Politics and Education: An Examination of Selected Multiple State Case Studies", a paper presented at the AERA Annual Meeting, San Francisco, April 1979. "...states such as New York and Massachusetts seem everpresent, Nebraska and South Carolina rarely appear, and Alabama and Montana are never studied. In fact, 21 of the 50 states have not yet appeared in any published multiple state case studies -- an astounding 42%." (p. 17).

[18]One exception to this is found in Campbell and Mazzoni's Chapter VI, "The Politics of School Finance Reform." Of course, there are other exceptions.

[19]The literature is growing quickly, but many of the interesting studies are discussed in E. C. Hargrove, The Missing Link: The Study of the Implementation of Social Policy, Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 1975; D. Van Meter and C. Van Horn, "The Policy Implementation Process: A Conceptual Framework", Administration and Society, Vol 6, 1974, 445-488; and E. Bardach, The Implementation Game, Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Press, 1977.

[20]See, for example, R. F. Elmore, "Mapping Backward" Using Implementation Analysis to Structure Policy Decisions", Paper prepared for the APSA Annual Meeting, September 1979.

[21]See, for example, P. Berman and M. W. McLaughlin, Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change, 4 vols., Santa Monica, Ca.: Rand Corpora-

tion, 1975, and M. A. Levin, "Conditions Contributing to Effective Implementation and Their Limits", a draft paper prepared for the Public Policy and Management Conference, October, 1979.

[22]J. S. Berke, and M. W. Kirst, eds., Federal Aid to Education: Who Benefits? Who Governs?, Lexington, Ma.: D. C. Heath, 1972.

[23]J. T. Murphy, State Education Agencies..., op. cit.

[24]R. Weatherly and M. Lipsky, "Street-Level Bureaucrats and Institutional Innovation: Implementing Special Education Reform", Harvard Educational Review, vol. 47, 171-197, 1977.

[25]Syracuse Research Corporation, A Study of the Administration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I in Eight States, Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse Research Corporation, October 1977.

[26]Ibid., p. 184.

[27]L. M. McDonnell and M. W. McLaughlin, Program Consolidation and the State Role in ESEA Title IV, Santa Monica, Ca.: Rand Corporation, forthcoming 1980.

[28]For a discussion of the "evolution" process, see G. Majone and A. Wildavsky, "Implementation as Evolution: Exorcising the Ghosts in the Implementation Machine", Russell Sage Discussion Papers, No. 2. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1978. For a discussion of the "improvisation" process, see E. Farrar et al., "Views From Below: Implementation Research in Education", Cambridge, Ma.: Huron Institute, 1979. "Maturation" process is my preferred term.

[29]M. W. Kirst, "The State Role in Regulating Local Schools", in Government in The Classroom: Dollars and Power in Education, edited by M. F. Williams, N.Y.: The Academy of Political Science, 1978, p. 45.

[30]Ibid., p. 45.

[31]A. E. Wise, Legislated Learning: The Bureaucratization of the American Classroom, Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1979.

[32]Ibid., p.x.

[33]Ibid., p. 200.

[34]Ibid., p. xiii.

[35]Ibid., p. 212.

[36]See, for example, D. J. Elazar, "Centralizing and Decentralizing Tendencies in Contemporary Federal Systems: A Preliminary Inquiry", a paper prepared for the International Political Science Association Congress, Moscow, August, 1979; J. T. Murphy, "Centralizing and Decentralizing Trends

in Federal Systems: Education Policy in Australia and the United States", a paper prepared for the International Political Science Association Congress, Moscow, August 1979; and R. Gratter, ed., Control of the Curriculum: Issues and Trends in Britain and Europe, London: University of London Institute of Education, 1977.

[37]Of course, there are serious school problems not directly related to policy--economic and social problems, not to mention evidence of loss of confidence.

[38]Berman and McLaughlin, op. cit.

[39]M. S. Tucker, Proposed "Educational Quality Act". Unpublished memorandum, Washington, D.C.: NIE, 1977.

[40]Farrar, op. cit.

[41]Elmore, op. cit., p. 4.

[42]D. W. Burnes, "A Case Study of Federal Involvement in Education", in Government in the Classroom, op. cit.

[43]For example, see C. H. Weiss, "Research for Policy's Sake: The Enlightenment Function of Social Research", Policy Analysis, Vol. 3., no. 4, Fall, 1977.

[44]F. M. Wirt, "Diversity and Turbulence in American State Education Policy: E. Pluribus Without Unum", University of Illinois, First Draft, May 1979, p. 56.

[45]Kirst has made the same recommendation in his article, "The State Role...", op. cit. p. 50.

[46]I've limited my discussion to the cumulative impact of state policies because that's the focus of the paper. In fact, it might make sense to combine a look at state policies with those of the federal government and the courts.

[47]Burlingame and Geske, op. cit., p. 14.

[48]D. K. Wiles, "State Level Educational Politics: Old Problems and New Research Directions," a paper prepared for the AERA Annual Meeting, April 1979, pp 1-2.

[49]Ibid., p. 20. On this point, also see C. E. Lindblom and D. K. Cohen, Usable Knowledge: Social Science and Social Problem Solving, New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1979.

[50]An effort in this direction is J. T. Murphy, Getting the Facts: A Fieldwork Guide for Evaluators and Policy Analysts, Santa Monica, Ca.: Goodyear Publishing Co., 1980.

[51]Richard P. Nathan, "The Brookings Monitoring Research Methodology for Studying the Effects of Federal Grant-In-Aid Programs", a paper prepared for APSA Annual Meeting, September 1979.

[52]E. W. Pauley, "Does It Really Matter? - Educational Policy Research Carries on", Public Administration Review, Vol. 38, No. 6, November/December 1978, 598-602.

[53]There's some evidence that this is changing. For example, the Harvard JFK School recently discovered the states and is now developing some impressive programs in that area.

[54]See the memorandum dated, December 27, 1979, to the authors of commissioned papers on the state role from Donald W. Burnes, Team Leader, Legal and Governmental Studies Team. "After some discussion, we have decided to focus our attention, at least for the next two or three years, on issues related to the State role in education policy making." (p. 1).